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FRENCH'S Parlor Comedies

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NEW YORK:
Samuel French & Son,
PUBLISHERS,
No. 122 Nassau Street.

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SAMUEL FRENCH,
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FRENCH'S PARLOR COMEDIES.

No. 3.

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW;

OR,

A DIVORCE WANTED.

Adapted from the French of "Le Proces Veradieux,"

BY

J. V. PRICHARD.

Now being played under the titles of "Great Divorce Case," "Life," and "Wanted, a Divorce."

A Comedy in Three Acts.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAJOR RODNEY TUMBLEBULL.
MR. JOHNSTON JOHNS.
MR. SILENUS COBB.
LORD MORDAUNT BLINKERS.
CHIEF OF POLICE.
SECRETARY OF POLICE.

HON. MRS. CHATTERTON STILL.
MRS. JOHNSTON JOHNS.
MRS. EMILY BELCHER.
LADY MORDAUNT BLINKERS.
KATE, ANGELINA, SOPHIA, } *SERVANTS.*

Scene: The First and Third Acts in the Study of Mr. Johnston Johns, in London. The Second, at the residence of Mrs. Belcher. *Time:* The present.

COSTUMES.

Major Rodney Tumbelbull.—A half-military fatigue suit, with silk hat, gloves and cane.

Mr. Johnston Johns.—First Dress, handsome walking suit. Second Dress, ordinary light morning suit.

Mr. Silenus Cobb.—The same.

Lord Mordaunt Blinkers.—First Dress, full evening suit, white gloves and opera hat. Second Dress, handsome walking suit, silk hat, gloves and cane.

Chief of Police.—Policeman's suit.

Secretary.—Plain black suit.

Hon. Mrs. Chatterton Still.—First Dress, afternoon street suit, bonnet, gloves, etc. Second Dress, morning street suit, bonnet, gloves, parasol.

Mrs. Johnston Johns.—Pretty dinner dress in *First Act*. White muslin morning dress in *Third Act*.

Mrs. Emily Belcher.—First Dress, a negligée house dress. Second Dress, elegant evening costume.

Lady Mordaunt Blinkers.—Elegant street dress, bonnet, gloves, parasol.

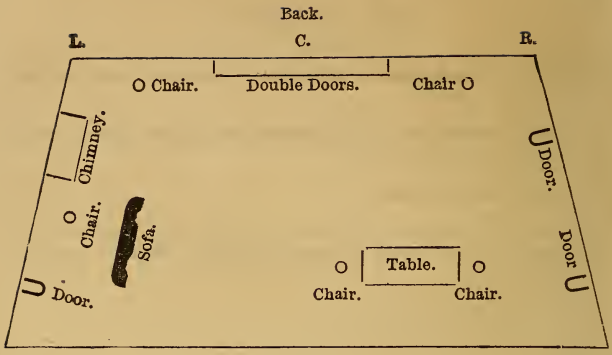
Kate, Angelina and Sophia.—Ordinary servants' dresses.

PROPERTIES.

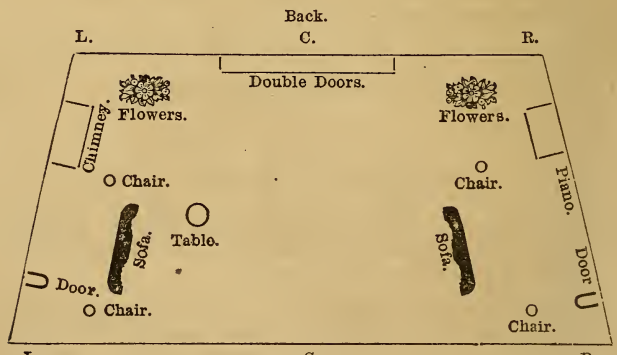
Act First.—Table with writing materials and legal documents. Lawyers' green bags for Johns and Cobb. Black coat and hat for Johns. Shawl for the Major. Feather duster for Angelina.

Act Second.—Two pictures on the wall, one of them representing a little dog. Lighted lamp on table. Pack of cards. Bouquet for Cobb. Two shillings for Johns. Two button-hole bouquets for Johns. Door-key for Johns. Vinaigrette for Mrs. Belcher. Glass of water. Dressing-gown and smoking-cap for Johns. Tea-tray and service.

Act Third.—Package for Johns, with coat and hat in it. Black coat and jammed hat for Mrs. Still. Visiting cards for Kate. Clock on mantel. Packet of papers for Lady Blinkers. Vase on chimney.



ACTS FIRST AND THIRD.—The Study in Mr. Johnston Johns' House.



ACT SECOND.—The Drawing-room in Mrs. Belcher's House.

The stage directions are given as viewed from the auditorium.

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The study of* MR. JOHNSTON JOHNS. *Two doors on the right; one door and a chimney-piece on the left. Double doors at the back. On the* R. C., *a large writing-table, covered with books, paper, briefs, etc.* L. C., *a sofa. Chairs and furniture dress the scene.*

(*As the curtain rises,* JOHNSTON JOHNS *is discovered seated at the table, taking papers out of a lawyer's green bag.*)

KATE. (*Putting her head in at the doors at back.*) Mr.—— Mr.—— (*Forgets the name.*)

JOHNS. Well, what is it?

KATE. I've forgotten his name.

JOHNS. Go and find out then. [*Exit* KATE.] That girl becomes a greater fool every day!

KATE. (*Putting in her head.*) Mr. Silenus Cobb, the advocate.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Happy fate! (*Aloud.*) Show the gentleman up, Kate.

Enter SILENUS COBB, *laughing; he stops at the back; has a green bag under his arm.*

COBB. Is Mr. Johnston Johns at home?

KATE. (*Laughing loudly.*) What a stupid! Don't you see him?

JOHNS. (*Advancing and shaking hands with* COBB.) Silence, Tomkins!

COBB. (*Astonished.*) Tomkins! Is that your new maid's name?

KATE. Oh, no, sir! My name's Kate—Kate Diggles. Native born of Abergavenny. Master's only joking.

JOHNS. Tomkins!

KATE. What do you call me that for?

JOHNS. (*Recollecting.*) Oh, by-the-by, yes. I must explain. My step-mother, you see, had Kate sent up from the country.

KATE. Be good enough to say, from out of town, not from the country.

JOHNS. Silence, I say! She took the place of our late Buttons, who was called Tomkins; and so from the force of habit I call Kate Tomkins. Do you see?

COBB. She's a droll piece, at all events, this Tomkins—Kate. (*Places his bag on the table.*)

JOHNS. (*To* KATE.) Is my mother-in-law in?

KATE. Yes, sir. Do you want me to speak to her?

JOHNS. Just be good enough to say, *Please, sir*, shall I speak to her? Don't forget that, especially when I'm not alone.

KATE. Well, *please, sir*, shall I stir up the old lady?

JOHNS. No! Leave me! [*Exit* KATE.] Well, my dear Cobb, you have come just in the nick of time.

COBB. How so?

JOHNS. Five minutes later and you would have missed me. We should probably have passed each other on the way; for I was just starting to call upon you.

COBB. Some particular business?

JOHNS. (*Lowering his voice and looking round.*) Yes. And you—

COBB. (*Lowering his voice and looking round.*) Something particular also. I must be free by nine o'clock this evening.

JOHNS. Stay! So must I, by eight.

COBB. And was that the reason you were coming to me?

JOHNS. Exactly. I was going to beg you to drop me a line, which should serve as a pretext for my wife.

COBB. Indeed. I was going to ask you to do the very same thing for me. We may as well write the letters together.

JOHNS. Have you some of your own paper in the bag there?

COBB. Plenty. (*He takes a sheet of paper from the bag, seats himself at one side of the table, while* JOHNS *sits at the other.*) So, are you in some fix?

JOHNS. Alas, yes.

COBB. My poor friend! Some pecuniary trouble?

JOHNS. Worse. A mother-in-law.

JOHNS and COBB. (*Writing.*) Dear confrere—

JOHNS. (*Writing.*) It is my duty to recall to your mind—

COBB. (*Writing.*) I have the honor of warning you—

JOHNS. (*Writing.*) That this evening— (*Speaking.*) What hour are you going to say?

COBB. Nine o'clock.

JOHNS. Eight o'clock for me. (*Writing.*) We have a— (*Speaking.*) Which would you say—an arbitration or a report?

COBB. Oh, say an arbitration. Sounds bigger.

JOHNS. (*Writing.*) An arbitration—

COBB. *Writing.*) In the— (*Speaking.*) What trial would you say?

JOHNS. In the Cheatwell trial. You know old Cheatwell?

COBB. Good! Cheatwell, by all manner of means. (*Both write.*) Ah, an idea!

JOHNS. What is it?

COBB. If we dine together, what do you say to a regular blow-out at the Criterion?

JOHNS. Splendid! I was to dine with my mother-in-law; but this is deliverance.

COBB. All right. (*Writing.*) As it is important that we should confer beforehand, meet me at—

JOHNS. (*Writing.*) Six o'clock, precisely.

JOHNS and COBB. (*Writing.*) Don't fail. (*They write and sign.*)

COBB. Envelope! (*They fold paper and place in envelopes.*)

JOHNS. Where shall we meet?

COBB. At the corner of Oxford and Regent streets.

JOHNS. Agreed. Now the address. (*Writes.*) Silenus Cobb, Esq.,

COBB. (*Writing.*) Johnston Johns, Esq. (*Speaking.*) Got a stamp? (*Both place stamps on their letters.*) There, it is done. Now give me yours and I'll put it in the post.

JOHNS. Let us say five o'clock at Regent Circus. (*They rise and shake hands.*)

COBB. (*Laughing.*) My dear boy, I thought you the most sedate and uxorious being that ever lived.

JOHNS. Well, my Alice is a charming wife, and I love her very much; but—

COBB. Don't explain. Quite natural. I never yet met a hen-pecked husband who did not begin by adoring his wife.

JOHNS. But I assure you—

COBB. There, there. Don't swear by the conjugal infidelities.

JOHNS. My dear friend—

COBB. If the statement is false that a husband deceives his wife because he loves her, it is also true that he loves her because he deceives her. In a word, you adore your wife; but—

JOHNS. It is the fault of my mother-in-law. You have no mother-in-law, and are no judge. Ah! Did you know mine? Such an aggravating being! Always after me, morning and evening. When I'm out, she rummages over my papers and in my pockets. When I'm in, she comes upon me like a bomb with some excuse about her umbrella,

her gloves, or her handkerchief; but in reality to find out who I'm with, what I'm saying, or what I'm doing. Silence! Here she is.

Enter L. MRS. CHATTERTON STILL.

MRS. STILL. Son-in-law, have you seen my umbrella?

JOHNS. (*Aside to* COBB.) What did I tell you? Her umbrella!

MRS. STILL. Oh, pardon me. I'm disturbing you. (*Aside to* JOHNS.) Who is this man?

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) A fellow lawyer.

MRS. STILL. (*Aside.*) Present me.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) But I—

MRS. STILL. (*Aside, sternly.*) Present me!

JOHNS. Mr. Cobb, advocate. The Honorable Mrs. Chatterton Still, my mother-in-law. (*They salute.*)

MRS. S. (*To* COBB.) I ask your pardon, sir. I was looking for my umbrella.

COBB. (*Looking about.*) Allow me, Madam—

MRS. S. Oh, what a goose I am, to be sure! I left it in the hall. I'll take it as I go out. (*Aside to* JOHNS.) Rather a lively character for an advocate.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) That's not my fault.

MRS. S. (*Saluting* COBB.) Mr. Cobb.

COBB. (*Saluting.*) Your most obedient. [*Exit* Mrs. S.]

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) What an incubus! (*Aloud.*) Well, my friend, that is the way it is from morning till night. Besides, she is forever putting ideas into my wife's head that I am a deceiver, and such nonsense. Oh, to be rid of my mother-in-law! But just a week ago, such a charming little episode occurred.

COBB. Quite by chance?

JOHNS. Oh, quite so. An affair in an omnibus. Chance, you see, pure chance.

COBB. So? I congratulate you.

JOHNS. (*In raptures.*) Such delightful evenings! Such a drawing-room! And then the calm.

COBB. Yes, the calm.

JOHNS. When I compare it to the turmoil in this house!

COBB. What's her name?

JOHNS. Mrs. Belcher — Emily Belcher. Emily — and a blonde.

COBB. Oh, I'm acquainted with a brunette! A protegée of a horrid old major somebody. (*Looks at his watch.*) One o'clock. I must go to court, and on my way I'll drop the letters in the post.

JOHNS. (*Going with* COBB *to door at back.*) Five o'clock.

COBB. Regent and Oxford Streets. [*Exit* COBB.

JOHNS. Well, well, well! If misery loves company, pleasure is not behind in showing a similar good taste.

MRS. STILL. (*Outside.*) Good-by, dear; I'm going out.

JOHNS. Oh, Lord! I can't face her again! [*Exit*, R.

Enter L. MRS. CHATTERTON STILL *and* MRS. JOHNSTON JOHNS.

MRS. S. Oh, they're gone!

MRS. J. Johnston *must* be out.

MRS. S. He's always out. Believe me, Alice, you must speak to-day.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

MRS. S. Be firm.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

MRS. S. And in case of need, say I wish it.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

MRS. S. I know these men. I tell you, if Johnston Johns, an advocate without a client, remains in London, he is lost! You are lost! We are all lost!

MRS. J. But, mamma, you frighten me.

MRS. S. No need of that, so long as your mother is on the watch. But I *will* have your husband leave London. Oh, if he had a client—just one! He should leave a light burning in this study all night; it would make people think he was at work. Adieu. Remember, we all dine together this evening.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma. [*Exit* MRS. STILL *at the back.*

JOHNS. (*Putting his head in at door* R.) Is she gone?

MRS. J. (*Starting.*) What! are you there? Why have you not said good-by to mamma?

JOHNS. Because I said good day to her when she came.

MRS. J. You are not civil to her; and she loves you so dearly. She talks to me constantly of you.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Too much; too much altogether.

MRS. J. (*Sitting on sofa.*) Come, sit by me here. Let us talk over an idea she had this morning.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) An idea of my mother-in-law? Take care!

MRS. J. You remember Balefield Lodge? (JOHNS *sits.*)

JOHNS. Your mother's estate near Bristol? Where we had such a nice time?

MRS. J. (*Joyously.*) Oh, did we not?

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Humph! cracking each other's jaws.

MRS. J. What charming society is there!

JOHNS. Of course. The curate, the sheriff, and the veterinary surgeon.

Mrs. J. We played cards every evening.

Johns. Yes, for nothing, and went to bed at nine o'clock, like so many chickens. Excellent for the health.

Mrs. J. Well, why should we not go there and live permanently?

Johns. (*Aghast.*) And leave London?

Mrs. J. Of course.

Johns. That is an idea. (*Aside.*) Absurd! (*Aloud.*) And one of your mother's notions.

Mrs. J. Why, yes.

Johns. Oh, I'm not astonished!

Mrs. J. (*Rising.*) The place of Justice of the Peace is vacant there, and mamma says she is certain she could obtain it for you.

Johns. You may thank your mother; but I'm not ambitious. I'm no respecter of honor.

Mrs. J. Life in London is becoming more and more expensive; and, as mamma says, it is a dangerous place for a man who has nothing to do.

Johns. Who has nothing to do! Why, I'm an advocate.

Mrs. J. But you never plead. And after two years of married life, you are still expecting your first case.

Johns. Oh, it will come in time. I go to court every day, and walk up and down in my gown and wig. Oh, I'm well known.

Mrs. J. That's all very well, but—

Johns. Now, my dear Alice, don't you trouble yourself about me. Don't dream of going into the country. You, young and brilliant as you are, and I, with every promise of success and a name, go and shut ourselves up in a hole! Rust out in a village with four or five mummies—

Mrs. J. Well, obtain a case then. That is necessary, at all events, to quiet mamma. She is determined we shall leave London, and I am in the habit of obeying her, because —well, because she is always right.

Johns. Well, now you be quiet. I will go and call upon the President of the Assizes this very day.

Mrs. J. Do so, by all means. Explain to him your situation. Perhaps he may—

Johns. Give me an office with twelve shillings an hour, or so.

Mrs. J. It is not much, I know, but it will please mamma, and that is a great deal.

Mrs. Still. (*Outside.*) Hold your tongue!

Mrs. J. There's mamma.

Johns. So it seems. (*Goes to* R.)

Enter MRS. STILL, *in a rage.*

MRS. S. You are an insolent hussy! Do you hear? *insolent!*

JOHNS. What is the trouble, mother-in-law?

MRS. S. That miserable— See here. You must dismiss the cook this instant.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Halloo! Another one to go?

MRS. J. What has happened?

MRS. S. In going out, just now, I said to myself, Stop; I'll just take a look into the kitchen. Lo! Angelina was not there; she never is.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) What a whopper!

MRS. S. (*Looking at* J. *severely.*) There are some people who are *always* out.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Caught.

MRS. S. I availed myself of the opportunity to take a general inspection of the premises; and fancy what I found. A letter in a sauce-pan! I was just beginning to read it when that girl came in; and in the first place she never said good morning to me!

ANG. (*Putting her head in at the doors back.*) Excuse me, madam; I said good morning.

MRS. S. Oh, you're listening now, are you?

MRS. J. Go away, Angelina.

ANG. (*Aside.*) It's many a time I've left the last word to her. (*She disappears.*)

MRS. S. I had just commenced to make some observations, for her good, of course, when I heard her mumbling.

MRS. J. What did she mumble?

MRS. S. She was calling me an old warming-pan.

MRS. J. (*Horrified.*) Oh, mamma!

JOHNS. (*Laughing.*) Warming-pan!

MRS. S. (*Severely.*) And you can laugh! (*To* MRS. J.) Yes, my child, she called your mother a warming-pan.

ANG. (*At the doors.*) I did no such thing.

MRS. S. There again?

MRS. J. Angelina!

ANG. (*Entering.*) Why should she say I say things which I never did say?

MRS. S. (*Advancing.*) You did not call me a—

ANG. No, I didn't.

MRS. S. I heard you.

ANG. Then, if you did hear me, what do you ask me if I did for?

MRS. S. She avows it! Leave the house!

ANG. I don't take orders from you, marm.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) That's it! Go on!

ANG. (*To* MRS. J.) Do you dismiss me, mistress?

MRS. J. Yes.

ANG. Very well. It will be a trouble to find so hard a place as this. (*She brandishes her dusting-brush, throws it on a chair, and exits at back.*)

MRS. S. Oh, these servants! What a brood!

JOHNS. Well, so we are without a cook.

MRS. S. And pray, would you consent to eat a meal which had been served up by a person who had insulted your mother-in-law?

JOHNS. But I considered her cooking excellent.

MRS. S. You've no heart.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) That's quite possible; but I have a stomach.

MRS. S. (*Throwing herself upon the sofa.*) I've a great mind to send to the country for Tomkins' sister.

JOHNS. The two would make a nice pair! (*Sits at table.*)

MRS. S. (*To* MRS. J.) Have you spoken to your husband?

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

MRS. S. Well?

JOHNS. Well, I refuse.

MRS. S. You refuse?

JOHNS. Flatly.

MRS. S. There must be some powerful motives which attach you to London.

JOHNS. How do you mean?

MRS. S. I mean for a husband who has nothing to do, and constantly absents himself from home.

JOHNS. I fail to comprehend you.

MRS. S. Ever since you have been married, your study here has been the very picture of emptiness.

JOHNS. Emptiness is attractive, mother-in-law.

MRS. S. That may be; but it hasn't attracted clients. You have not had one case yet.

JOHNS. Well, that's not my fault. I have clients, but they have no suits.

MRS. S. Then they are not clients; merely acquaintances.

JOHNS. But an advocate's duties do not consist in pleading alone. For instance, I have an arbitration this evening.

MRS. J. (*Rising.*) Indeed! (MRS. S. *rises and goes* R.)

JOHNS. Yes, in the famous Cheatwell trial.

MRS. J. (*Joyfully.*) Oh, mamma! an arbitration!

MRS. S. Well, and what of it?

MRS. J. Why, you see, he is beginning to work.

MRS. S. Then you are going out this evening?

JOHNS. Yes, only for a short time.

MRS. S. When have you passed an evening at home?

JOHNS. But I am always called out upon business. Duty before all.

MRS. J. Certainly!

JOHNS. Besides, have I not been appointed counsel for Major Rodney Tumblebull?

MRS. S. (*Disdainfully.*) Humph! That is a nice distinction!

JOHNS. Major Tumblebull is an old friend of my family, and of yours, too, so far as that goes!

MAJOR TUMBLEBULL. (*Putting his head in at doors at back.*) Ha! They are taking my name in vain!

MRS. S. A fine client that for you to have, and one who will set you a good example! A gentleman who lives a most questionable sort of life!

MAJOR T. (*Aside.*) Indeed!

MRS. S. He's neither brains nor any thing else! An old goose who has been obliged to have a guardian placed over him to see that he does not waste what little he has left! A perfect gad-about and a *roué!*

Enter MAJOR TUMBLEBULL.

MAJOR T. Thank you, madam thank you. You certainly handle me *sans cérémonie*, and without gloves!

ALL. Major Tumblebull!

MAJOR. (*To* MRS. S.) You are very considerate of your friends, madam. It makes no difference, however, for I bear you no malice. (*Kisses her hand.*)

MRS. S. You were eaves-dropping, flatterer! A regular old bachelor's trick!

MAJOR. A bachelor! It is your fault that I am so!

MRS. S. Mine!

MAJOR. Was I not once young, rich and handsome? You repulsed me! Since then I have sought to annihilate memory, (*with an amorous glance,*) but without success.

MRS. S. (*Pleased.*) Hush, you flirt!

MAJOR. (*Passing his hand through his hair, as if to collect his ideas.*) What was I going to say?

JOHNS. (*Laughing.*) You were assuring my mother-in-law that your memory was not to be annihilated.

MAJOR. Yes, but it was not for that that I came here. (*Rubbing his head.*) Why did I come? Singular! I'm very much muddled at times.

MRS. J. It will come to you. Pray be seated.

MAJOR. Oh no, thank you, for when I sit down I drop off to sleep. It's blasted odd, I know; I have good nights, but for all that I'm bothered with somnolence all day.

MRS. S. We will leave you, gentlemen; come, Alice, let us attend to kitchen matters.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

MAJOR. (*Saluting.*) Ladies.

MRS. S. (*To Major.*) Pray don't demoralize my son-in-law. [*Exeunt* MRS. S. *and* MRS. J.

MAJOR. There's a woman for you! Ah, how happy I could have made her! Hey-day!

JOHNS. (*Laughing.*) There, there. Let my mother-in-law slide. What is it you have to say to me?

MAJOR. What have I to say to you? Listen. Ah, there are two things! In the first place I wish to see you about my allowance.

JOHNS. But you have over-drawn this month by four days.

MAJOR. Really! I did not think it.

JOHNS. Fact! You have already started on next month's money.

MAJOR. (*Sadly.*) Indeed! (*Aside.*) I must try my little dodge. (*Aloud.*) But after all it was not so much the allowance which brought me here as—(*Aside.*) We have him where the hair is short. (*Aloud.*)—as that I have trapped a client for you.

JOHNS. (*In ecstasy.*) A client with a suit!

MAJOR. A superb affair. A lady of rank, with a longing to be rid of her husband.

JOHNS. A divorce wanted? What luck! What's her name?

MAJOR. (*Troubled.*) Lady—Lady—Blasted odd of me, I have forgotten her name.

JOHNS. No matter, so long as she has business; that is all.

MAJOR. She happened to come to a house where I was calling yesterday. Let me see, in—in—in some square or other.

JOHNS. No matter; go on.

MAJOR. Well, they were talking over the advocate, Mr. John Pleadmore—

JOHNS. The most celebrated lawyer in London. I know him.

MAJOR. So do I; and they asked my opinion of his ability. Well, (*troubled,*) let me see, what did I say? Blasted odd of me, I can't think. Oh, Eureka! I have it! "Plead-

more," said I, "is one of the flowers of our bar." Rather good figure, I thought. Wish I could have said *wall* instead of *bar*, because I could have made a pun at old Pleadmore's expense—*wall-flower*, see ?

JOHNS. Very good indeed. What did you say next?

MAJOR. Oh, I assured them that Pleadmore was not in London.

JOHNS. What ! Not in London? Why, it was only yesterday that I met him in Court.

MAJOR. Bother your stupidity ! I swore to them that the physicians had sent him to Italy, with a case of paralysis of the tongue.

JOHNS. Fancy !

MAJOR. Then I mentioned you, and said that I knew you only by reputation. I told them that your specialty was divorces, and that you had separated no less than five hundred of the most spoony couples that ever stubbed their toes upon the course of true love. In fact, I white-washed you, gave your address, and to-day at four o'clock—

JOHNS. My dear friend, how can I thank you ! I am utterly at a loss to express myself.

MAJOR. Oh, that is of very little account to me, (*aside,*) so long as I get hold of the purse-strings again.

JOHNS. My first case, and how promising! You can form no idea of the service you have done me. My mother-in-law insists that I shall leave London because I have nothing to do. Dear Major Tumblebull, allow me! (*Shakes hands.*)

MAJOR. (*Aside.*) *Je l'ai!* English, I have him. Forward, battalion ! (*Aloud.*) Are you quite sure I have overrun my allowance for this month?

JOHNS. Four days ago.

MAJOR. Four days ago? Blasted odd ! I don't recollect doing so. But you see I have had to pay for several things in advance; now if you could allow me—

JOHNS. Oh, impossible, Major!

MAJOR. A mere trifle only. Two hundred pounds.

JOHNS. Two hundred pounds !

MAJOR. You cannot refuse, after the favor I have shown you.

JOHNS. But what do you do with your money? Four hundred a month, and a bachelor, too!

MAJOR. But every thing is so dear.

JOHNS. (*Shaking his head.*) Major, I—

KATE. (*Putting her head in at the doors at back and looking at the* MAJOR.) There's somebody to see you, sir.

MAJOR. (*Astonished.*) Me !

KATE. No, not you. (*Looking at* JOHNS.) Him!

JOHNS. What name?

KATE. Didn't ask.

JOHNS. You must always inquire the names of visitors.

KATE. Shall I go and ask the woman her name?

JOHNS. (*Starting.*) Is it a lady, then?

KATE. Well, she wore women's clothes.

MAJOR. Your client, by all that's good!

JOHNS. Beg the lady to walk up. [*Exit* KATE.

MAJOR. I will go and join the ladies in the drawing-room. I will return by-and-by and talk over the two hundred pounds.

JOHNS. (*Opening door*, R.) So—go! [*Exit* MAJOR, R. A client! My first case! (*Enter* LADY MORDAUNT BLINKERS *with great airs.*) Will you be so good as to be seated, madam. (*Drawing a chair to the* L. *of his table.*) I beg ten thousand pardons for keeping you waiting. (*Moving papers.* But I had several clients here.

LADY B. You should not have sent them away on my account, sir.

JOHNS. I was fairly obliged to do so. You know how it is when one is over-crowded with work! (*Pushes the papers to the other side.*) Now, madam, if you will kindly state your business; I am all ears.

LADY B. (*Glancing around.*) It will be necessary for me to draw up a little closer.

JOHNS. Draw up, by all means, madam.

LADY B. Well, sir, my parents were wealthy, and I had the misfortune to lose them when quite young. At eighteen years of age I found myself an orphan, and mistress of my fortune.

JOHNS. An orphan! (*Aside.*) And they do say that there are some men who lie in wait for orphans!

LADY B. About this period of my life I met in society a young man who pleased me, and without considering his poverty I married him. For two years Lord Blinkers was a charming husband.

JOHNS. Lord Blinkers!

LADY B. Lord Mordaunt Blinkers, my husband.

JOHNS. Oh, I did not know. (*Writes.*) Blinkers! (*Aside.*) The nobility! (*Aloud.*) Continue, please.

LADY B. I—

MRS. S. (*Putting her head in at door*, R.) Son-in-law, have you seen my gloves? (*She enters and stops at sight of* LADY B.) Oh, pardon me, I disturb you. (LADY B. *rises.*)

JOHNS. Be seated, madam, I beg of you. Excuse me one moment. (*Goes to* MRS. S.)

MRS. S. Who is that woman?

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) A client.

MRS. S. (*Aside.*) A client! I don't believe it.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) I assure you it is.

MRS. S. Present me.

JOHNS. I—

MRS. S. (*Sternly.*) Present me! I wish to see her.

JOHNS. (*Presenting.*) Hum, hum! Lady Mordaunt Blinkers. The Hon. Mrs. Chatterton Still, my mother-in-law.

(*They salute.*)

MRS. S. I beg your pardon, madam, but I was looking for my gloves.

LADY B. (*Rising.*) Allow me, madam—

MRS. S. Oh, what a goose I am, to be sure! I remember I left them in the dining-room. (*Aside to* JOHNS.) She's very pretty for a client.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) That's not my fault.

MRS. S. (*Aside.*) I shall keep one eye open. (*Aloud, saluting.*) Madam!

LADY B. (*Saluting.*) Madam!

MRS. S. (*Aside.*) One eye open! [*Exit*, R.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) What fun it would be for me were she some other fellow's mother-in-law! (*Seating himself, aloud:*) I beg ten thousand pardons. You were saying that for two years Lord Blinkers made you a charming husband?

LADY B. Unfortunately, this did not last. To-day, Lord Blinkers is wasting my fortune with a lavish hand.

JOHNS. Gambler, no doubt.

LADY B. No. Lord Blinkers is not a gambler.

JOHNS. Oh, I understand.

LADY B. No, you do not. He is in the habit of making presents of the most expensive kind to a married lady—

JOHNS. Indeed!

LADY B. Whose husband is in America. You can easily divine that it is necessary for me to put a stop to this. But I fear I cannot obtain a divorce.

JOHNS. On the contrary, madam, it will be the easiest thing in the world.

LADY B. Indeed! How so?

JOHNS. Allow Lord Blinkers to pursue his course; we will resort to means which may appear violent to you.

LADY B. It makes no difference. The thing is to arrest my husband before he impoverishes me. Fancy, sir! He has had ten thousand pounds of pin-money already!

JOHNS. Ten thousand pounds in pin-money!

LADY B. Oh, sir, ten thousand pounds!

(KATE *appears listening at the back.*)

JOHNS. (*Rises and pleads.*) Ah! miserable wretches! You, who are the lepers of modern society! You who bear misfortune, shame, and misery even into the sanctuaries of your families! What terms can I find severe enough to scourge you with, to nail you to the pillory? You, and your accomplices—

KATE. (*Aside, surprised.*) How he is treating that woman!

LADY B. (*Seeing* KATE.) Sir, we are not alone.

JOHNS. (*To* KATE.) Well, what do you want?

KATE. I came to say that there is a client below.

JOHNS. Another!

KATE. In a great taking, sir. In a great taking.

LADY B. (*Rising.*) I am imposing upon your time, sir.

JOHNS. Oh, madam, believe me! Lose no time!

LADY B. I am not going to—I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again to-morrow.

JOHNS. I shall have the honor of waiting upon you. (*Aside to* KATE.) Conduct the lady—

KATE. What! all the way home?

JOHNS. Idiot! (*Conducting* LADY B.) Madam,

[*Exeunt at back.*

KATE. What a wretch that woman must be! Why, he said to her, (*imitating* JOHNS), "Miserable creature! I would see you nailed to a pillory!" What in the world can a pillory be?

JOHNS. (*Entering.*) Well, who wishes to see me?

KATE. (*Laughing.*) Nobody. It's a joke.

JOHNS. What!

KATE. Your mother-in-law sent me.

JOHNS. (*Annoyed.*) Ah!

KATE. She said as you had been long enough with that lady.

Enter MRS. STILL, MRS. JOHNS *and* MAJOR TUMBLEBULL, R.
Exit KATE, L.

MAJOR T. Well?

JOHNS. Oh, congratulate me. A superb affair which is going to make a great noise. A regular scandal.

ALL. Indeed!

JOHNS. Fancy! A woman of rank! Lady Mordaunt Blinkers in search of a divorce! And her husband, Lord Blinkers, a peer of England!

MRS. S. Preposterous!

MAJOR. And it was all my doings.

MRS. S. What, what, Major!

MAJOR. (*Seating himself on the sofa.*) That is, I obtained he case for your son-in-law. (*Falls asleep.*)

JOHNS. Do you understand ? I, Johnston Johns, am to plead before the nobility, the great wigs of the Bar, and all the Press of London. So farewell to country life ! London, I am—

KATE. (*Entering.*) Master !

JOHNS. Why do you interrupt me ?

KATE. A letter for you. (*Handing* JOHNS *a letter.*)

JOHNS. Any reply required ?

KATE. How should I know ? I didn't read it.

JOHNS. Stupid ! (*Opens letter.*) Ah ! The arbitration ! I had quite forgotten. Quick, my black coat and hat !

MRS. S. (*Severely.*) You do not dine with us, then ?

JOHNS. Impossible ! I dine with Mr. Silenus Cobb, my colleague. We must confer. See ! (*Gives* MRS. S. *the letter.*)

KATE. (*Bringing coat and hat.*) Here !

JOHNS. (*Putting on coat.*) To-morrow, business ; to-night, pleasure.

MRS. S. (*Starting.*) What ?

JOHNS. Oh, ah, I said—

MRS. S. (*Sternly.*) You said, "To-night, pleasure."

JOHNS. Oh, yes. Because an arbitration, compared with a divorce, is a pleasure, relatively speaking.

MRS. J. Do not be late to-night, Johnston.

JOHNS. An arbitration is a tedious affair, my dear. (*He takes light yellow gloves from his pocket.*)

MRS. S. What ! yellow gloves?

JOHNS. (*Concealing gloves.*) Hum, hum ! I must buy some black ones. An arbitration, you know. (*Saluting.*) Mother-in-law ! Alice ! [*Exit.*

MRS. S. Yellow gloves, my dear ! Before twenty-four hours are passed over our heads, we must make arrangements to go to Balefield.

MRS. J. Yes, mamma.

KATE. I say ! You've forgotten the old fellow ! He's asleep, too. He'll catch cold.

(*Kate throws a shawl over the* MAJOR.)

MAJOR. (*Starting up.*) Asleep again ! And I have such good nights. Blasted odd of me !

[TABLEAU. CURTAIN.]

ACT II.

SCENE.—*An elegantly furnished drawing-room in the house of* MRS. EMILY BELCHER. *On the right, a door and a piano. On the left, a door and a chimney-piece. Double doors at the back, on the two sides of which stand jardinières of flowers; above the jardinières, two pictures, one of which represents a little dog. Sofas and chairs,* R. *and* L.

(*As the curtain rises,* MRS. EMILY BELCHER *is discovered lying upon the sofa,* R., *with a letter in her hand;* ANGELINA *and* SOPHIA *facing her.*)

MRS. B. (*To* ANGELINA.) Why have you left your last place?

ANG. Because my mistress's mother called me a bad name. She said I was a warming-pan.

MRS. B. Indeed.

SOPHIA. I always said to Angelina I didn't see how she could live with such common people.

ANG. (*Aside to* SOPHIA.) Go on, go on.

SOPHIA. If mistress would be good enough to try my cousin here, I know she would be satisfied with her. I will answer for that.

MRS. B. We shall see about that by-and-by. (*To* ANGELINA.) In the mean time, you may remain here with your cousin.

SOPHIA. Mistress is very good. (*Aside to* ANGELINA.) Thank her you.

ANG. I assure you, madam, I—

MRS. B. That's all right. You may return to the kitchen.

ANG. Good evening, Mrs. Belcher.

(MRS. B. *nods.* *Exit* ANGELINA *at back.*)

SOPHIA. (*Arranging the lamp on the table.*) Does mistress expect any one this evening?

MRS. B. Lord Blinkers has an engagement, and therefore cannot come. I rather expect Mr. Green Greville, however, and, *apropos* of his coming, have you shut Bijou up?

SOPHIA. Yes, ma'am, she is in your chamber.

MRS. B. I must get rid of her in some way. She has bitten Mr. Green Greville once, and barks incessantly whenever she sees him. It was only yesterday that she flew at him like a little tigress.

SOPHIA. Indeed. Oh, she's perfectly rabid. Shall I light the fire in the library?

MRS. B. No, I will receive Mr. Greville here. Give me a pack of cards.

SOPHIA. (*Handing a pack of cards.*) Mistress seems troubled this evening?

MRS. B. Yes, I am troubled. I have just received this letter from America. (*Shuffles the cards.*)

SOPHIA. From master?

MRS. B. No, but from one of his friends who keeps me posted.

SOPHIA. Really!

MRS. B. He says something of my husband's return to London, as though he were not happy in New York.

SOPHIA. What a pity!

MRS. B. (*Showing the cards.*) See! The Queen of Hearts! She has been furious ever since we were married. She is doing all she can to bring about a divorce.

SOPHIA. A divorce?

MRS. B. (*Throwing down the cards and rising.*) Oh, these cards annoy me. (*Bell rings.*) There is the door-bell. Go quick. [*Exit* SOPHIA.] Eight o'clock. It must be Mr. Green Greville.

SOPHIA. (*Entering.*) It is Mr. Greville, mistress.

MRS. B. Ask him to walk in.

SOPHIA. But he is not alone.

MRS. B. What!

SOPHIA. He has a friend with him, whom he begs to present.

MRS. B. A stranger, and I in this dress! Show them in. I will join them in a moment. [*Exit*, L.

SOPHIA. Very good, mistress. (*Going to door*, R.) This way, if you please, gentlemen.

Enter JOHNSTON JOHNS *and* SILENUS COBB; *the latter carrying a bouquet.*

JOHNS. Certainly, with pleasure. Dear Mrs. Belcher, allow me to present—

SOPHIA. Mistress is engaged for a moment.

JOHNS. Oh, pardon me.

SOPHIA. But she begs you will be seated, gentlemen.

JOHNS. Thank you, thank you. Here, my dear. (*Gives* SOPHIA *a shilling.*)

SOPHIA. A shilling! Oh, thank you, Mr. Greville. [*Exit*, L.

JOHNS. (*Seating himself with great airs.*) Do as I do, Cobb. For heaven's sake, put down your bouquet, and be seated.

COBB. With pleasure. I'm ready to drop with fatigue. (*Sits.*)

JOHNS. Well, I have dropped.

COBB. (*Looking round.*) What taste!

JOHNS. Perfect, is it not?

COBB. You say your friend, Mrs. Belcher, is a blonde. My Miss Coddleton is a brunette; and *such* a complexion!

JOHNS. (*Starting.*) Coddleton! I have heard that name before.

COBB. Oh, it's quite common. But tell me—you are sure that there is nothing indiscreet in my coming here as I have?

JOHNS. No, not in the least. Presented by me, you will find yourself most welcome.

COBB. (*Looking at the dog's picture.*) See! There's a regular King Charles.

JOHNS. That is Bijou, my deadliest enemy; a most rabid creature. Still it is to her that I owe my acquaintance with Mrs. Belcher.

COBB. Some present you have sent her?

JOHNS. No. Fancy! Just a week ago, I was walking in the Strand, when it began to rain, and such a deluge as it was. Fortunately there was an omnibus passing at the time, and I jumped into it. I stood there looking to the right and left for a seat, when the vehicle gave a lurch, and I was thrown off my base.

COBB. Exactly what happened to me; only I sat down in an old lady's lap.

JOHNS. So did I; only mine was young.

COBB. Good enough.

JOHNS. Just as I found myself comfortably down, I heard a shriek of, "Good Heavens, Bijou!" I stammered some excuse, when she cried, "You clumsy creature, you have crushed my dog!" Thereupon she raised her cloak, and lo! there lay Bijou upon an ocean of laces and silks.

COBB. Dead?

JOHNS. No, asleep. She woke up, however, and set up a deafening howl. The conductor interfered in behalf of the passengers' ears, and obliged the lady to get out. A cab was passing, and she got into it, but not before I heard the address she gave the coachman. An hour later I presented myself at the house with a veterinary surgeon, and next day I called to inquire how Bijou had passed the night.

COBB. Sheer diplomacy on your part.

JOHNS. Well, you can divine the rest.

COBB. (*Rising.*) Of course. Well, my friend, it was not a dog, but a duck who presented me to Miss Coddleton.

JOHNS. What a duck, to be sure!

COBB. I should say two ducks—a pair of them. It was up at the Zoological Gardens. Miss Coddleton was making the rounds on the arm of some old codger, and stopped to admire some Chinese ducks—those little fellows with bright feathers.

JOHNS. I know.

COBB. What did I do? Why, I purchased a splendid pair; ten pounds they cost me.

JOHNS. Ten pounds!

COBB. It was a fearful price, I own; but taking the ducks under my arm, I followed. They took a cab.

JOHNS. The ducks?

COBB. No, stupid! The lady and her friend! I took one also, and an hour later I learned her name and address. I forthwith sent the ducks, with a most amorous note.

JOHNS. Not a bad idea.

COBB. That same evening I received a letter of thanks, together with an invitation to dinner the next day. I was on time, as you may fancy. But judge of my stupefaction, when the roast being served, I saw my two little Chinese—

JOHNS. Ducks?

COBB. Yes, my friend; there were my ducks served up with a white sauce.

JOHNS. (*Laughing.*) A ten-pound roast! Gods, your Dulcinea must be a regular fool!

COBB. No, only a little fantastic. Even while she enjoyed the ducks, she told me she should like to try an ostrich. Her old fossil of a friend may do that for her; but in the future I mean to confine myself to bouquets. By-the-by, where is mine? Oh, there it is on the piano.

SOPHIA. (*Entering*, L.) Gentlemen, here is Mrs. Belcher.

JOHNS. Here! (*He draws from his pocket two button-hole bouquets, and gives one to* COBB; *they place them in their coats.*)

COBB. Thanks; a little decoration.

JOHNS. Imparts a *distingué* air, you know.

Enter MRS. BELCHER *in full dress*, L. *Exit* SOPHIA, R.

MRS. B. Gentlemen, I am distressed at being obliged to keep you waiting.

JOHNS and COBB. (*Bowing.*) Don't mention it, madam.

MRS. B. (*To* JOHNS.) Good evening! (*They shake hands.*)

JOHNS. Permit me to present my friend, Sir Drake Watts.

COBB. (*Aside.*) What's he say?

JOHNS. (*Hitting* COBB *behind.*) A secretary of legation.

COBB. (*Aside.*) Thunder!

JOHNS. Decorated with several foreign Orders, and the

poet of the hour. (*Aside to* COBB:) Now you're in clear water.

MRS. B. (*Advancing and taking* COBB'S *hand.*) Sir Drake, I'm enchanted to meet you, especially as you are a friend of Mr. Green Greville.

COBB. (*Aside.*) Green Greville!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) That is I.

COBB. (*Aside.*) What next?

MRS. B. Be seated, I pray.

JOHNS. (*Presenting* COBB'S *bouquet.*) Dear Mrs. Belcher, will you do me the pleasure to accept these few flowers?

MRS. B. (*Graciously.*) You never have forgotten how I love flowers.

JOHNS. (*Gallantly.*) They are a charming reminiscence to me of you, and I trust the rule works both ways.

MRS. B. What a charming sentiment! (*She rises and places the bouquet in a vase upon the mantel.*)

COBB. (*Aside.*) Thunder, man! That's my bouquet you are giving away there!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Oh, you can take it when you go.

MRS. B. (*Returning to the sofa.*) Well, Sir Drake, what is there new at the Embassy?

COBB. (*Embarrassed.*) Well—(*aside*)—he may have put me in *clear* water, but it's mighty *deep* all the same. (*Aloud:*) There is really nothing new under the sun. You know, politics—

JOHNS. (*Disgusted.*) Politics!

COBB. Remain about the same. One party skirmishes here— (*With a gesture.*)

JOHNS. (*Mocking him.*) And another there.

COBB. And some—

MRS. B. (*Laughing.*) Skirmish all round.

COBB. That's about it. I see you understand. It is rather tiresome for those who want to stand in the middle to be skirmished on all sides.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Lor! He's done for.

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) How very stupid, for a nobleman!

COBB. (*Aside.*) I'm positively afraid of her.

MRS. B. (*Rising.*) Won't you have a cup of tea, Sir Drake?

COBB. Oh, thanks, yes! (*Aside to* JOHNS:) My time has come.

MRS. B. I'm going to ring for the tea. (*Goes to mantel.*)

COBB. I must confess to feeling a little indisposed this evening.

MRS. B. Oh, the tea will put you all right.

COBB. (*Rising.*) No, I think I had better go.

MRS. B. Shall I send for a cab?

COBB. Oh, there's no need, thank you.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) He's nothing to pay for one with.

MRS. B. (*Insisting.*) Oh, yes. Pray allow me. My servant will summon one in a moment.

JOHNS. Sir Drake does not require a cab. (*Aside to* COBB:) Don't make a fool of yourself. Tell her the truth.

MRS. B. (*Astonished.*) The truth?

JOHNS. Yes; it is that my friend desires to make a call in this neighborhood. It is nine o'clock, and Miss Coddleton will be expecting him.

MRS. B. Miss Coddleton! Why, she is my cousin, and is staying with me. She is in the music room at this very moment.

COBB. (*Aside.*) It's all up with Sir Drake now.

MRS. B. I will accompany, and introduce you.

COBB. A thousand thanks, madam. (*Aside:*) Oh, Lord!

MRS. B. (*Aside to* JOHNS.) I will return in a moment. (*They speak together.*)

COBB. Oh, my bouquet! (*Rushes to the mantel and raises the bouquet.*) No use. She has put it in water. (MRS. B. *goes*, R.) (*Aside to* JOHNS:) Wretch, she's put it in water! (*Saluting* MRS. B.) Madam.

[*Exeunt* MRS. B. *and* COBB, R.

JOHNS. (*Laughing.*) Ah, poor Cobb, how embarrassed he was. (*Throws himself upon a sofa.*) Oh, how nice it is here, to be sure; so quiet. The flowers, the hangings, the light—all, all is Elysian. And then to be rid of forever hearing that sharp voice, "son-in-law, son-in-law." (*Rises.*) Positively, when my mother-in-law is not round, I am a man; I expand. (*Sits at piano and drums a tune.*)

ANG. (*Entering at the back.*) Why, here I am again. I've lost my way.

JOHNS. (*Perceives her with terror.*) Angelina! Here? (*He turns his back and begins to sound a key furiously.*)

ANG. (*Starting.*) Oh, pardon me, sir.

JOHNS. (*Changing his voice.*) I'm the tuner! the tuner!

ANG. (*Aside.*) This tuner seems uncomfortable about something.

JOHNS. (*Tapping the keys.*) Go away! go away!

ANG. I'm going, sir. (*Disappears at back.*)

JOHNS. (*Rising, terrified.*) Angelina! Am I watched? Angelina here? It cannot be possible. I must be suffering from some temporary derangement! Well, for the sake of prudence, I'll just close that door, and confiscate the key. (*Closes door at back, and pockets the key.*) There.

ANG. (*Entering*, R.) Well done. This house is a regular maze. (*Sees* JOHNS.) What !

JOHNS. (*Wildly.*) Well !

ANG. You here, sir ?

JOHNS. Yes—that is to say, no. I was passing, and merely came up.

ANG. Why, Sophy said that Mrs. Belcher's *beau* was up here.

JOHNS. (*Horrified.*) Will you be quiet !

ANG. (*Darting round a sofa, followed by* JOHNS.) Oh, Mr. Johns !

JOHNS. Plague take you ! If you say one word— But you don't know me ; you have never seen me before.

ANG. (*Laughing.*) Ah, ha ! What, Mr. Johnston Johns, the advocate ?

JOHNS. (*Excited.*) Here ! Here's a sovereign.

ANG. (*Taking it.*) Why, it's only a shilling, sir.

JOHNS. (*Pushing her out.*) Oh, that's all right.

(ANGELINA *goes out*, R. JOHNS *falls upon a chair.*)

ANG. (*Putting in her head.*) If you'll speak a good word for me, I'll not tell what—

JOHNS. (*Rising.*) Yes, yes. I'll say all you want me to say, only go away ! (*Pushes her*, R., *and closes the door.*) Good heavens ! How my heart beats! If that girl remains here, she *will* speak ! She must leave, and at once. I'll find her a place—in Africa. I would not have *her* doubt me for worlds. Here she is.

MRS. B. (*Entering*, R.) Well, here I am again. Now I'm all yours. (*Sits upon sofa*, R., JOHNS *sits beside her.*)

JOHNS. Ah ! I have awaited you impatiently.

MRS. B. See ! a new ring. (*Shows her hand.*)

JOHNS. Like your new maid, I don't recognize it.

MRS. B. Oh, she is Sophy's cousin. My jeweler insisted I should take it, but I hesitated.

JOHNS. Well, don't keep her ; she's a very bad cook.

MRS. B. I was not speaking of the cook, but of this ring.

JOHNS. Oh, keep the ring by all means ; it is superb.

MRS. B. And not so very dear ; only two hundred pounds.

JOHNS. Oh, that's nothing. What do you call her ?

MRS. B. It is an emerald.

JOHNS. Not your ring ; your maid.

MRS. B. Oh, Angelina, I believe.

ANGELINA. (*Appears*, R., *listening.*) They are talking about me.

MRS. B. It is very bright; and they assured me it was faultless.

JOHNS. Oh, well. But the very best servants have some faults.

MRS. B. (*Puzzled.*) What?

JOHNS. Do you know where she comes from?

MRS. B. Who? What?

JOHNS. Why, this woman, Angelina!

MRS. B. It seems to me the girl interests you in an extraordinary way. She appears to be a mania with you. Can't you attend to me?

ANG. (*Aside.*) He is going to recommend me now.

JOHNS. I merely wish to say that the girl displeases me particularly.

ANG. (*Starting.*) Ah, the wretch!

JOHNS. You know I have strong prejudices, and she—

ANG. Listen to him!

MRS. B. Oh, well, what matters it? I'll dismiss her. That's all. I will send her away to-morrow.

JOHNS. (*Kisses her hand.*) That is a greater favor than I dared to ask.

ANG. Oh, I'll be revenged! [*Disappears.*

MRS. B. But my ring—it is not paid for.

JOHNS. It shall be. Trust me. (*Aside:*) Though Heaven knows where the money is to come from!

SOPHIA. (*Entering in haste.*) Mistress, mistress!

MRS. B. What is it, Sophy?

SOPHIA. Lord Mordaunt Blinkers is below.

MRS. B. Good Heavens, what shall we do! Oh, pardon me, Mr. Greville; a most unexpected visit.

JOHNS. Give me my hat, quick!

MRS. B. (*Pointing to the back.*) Go that way.

JOHNS. (*Goes back.*) Locked! No key! [*Goes,* L.

MRS. B. No, no! There is no way out there!

JOHNS. (*Running to* R.) This way, then?

MRS. B. Impossible! You will meet him! Oh, I have it! Sophy, tell Lord Blinkers that I am very ill, and that the doctor is with me. Go! [*Exit* SOPHIA.

JOHNS. (*Calling.*) Say that I am very ill.

MRS. B. No, no; not you! *I* am the invalid, you are the doctor.

JOHNS. (*Stupefied.*) You, ill! I, the—

MRS. B. The lamp! Put it down!

JOHNS. Yes, yes! (*Puts lamp on the floor.*)

MRS. B. (*Wildly.*) Oh dear, no! Turn down the light! (JOHNS *lowers the light;* MRS. B. *throws herself upon a sofa and*

binds her head in a handkerchief.) There, come and sit by me, quick! Here, feel of my pulse! (JOHNS *does as he is told.*) Don't be so nervous; you tremble like a leaf.

SOPHIA. (*Entering.*) Chut!

MRS. B. Attention now! (*In a weak voice, as* LORD BLINKERS *enters:*) Oh, doctor, do you consider me in a critical condition? (*Aside.*) Answer.

JOHNS. (*Nervously.*) Oh, a few leeches and plasters—

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) Be quiet.

SOPHIA. (*Advancing.*) Mistress, here is his lordship.

MRS. B. (*Weakly.*) Oh, is it you, dear friend? I did not think to see you this evening. (JOHNS *rises.*)

LORD B. And I did not expect to find you thus. Are you very ill?

MRS. B. Oh, very. But thanks to this good doctor— (*Looks for* JOHNS.) Where is he?

LORD B. Pray do not allow me to disturb you, doctor.

JOHNS. (*Confused.*) Oh, yes; quite so, quite so!

MRS. B. Oh, you were looking for the ink, were you not, doctor? You will find it on the table yonder.

LORD B. (*Pointing.*) On the table, doctor! On the table!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Heaven grant he does not recognize me!

(*Seats himself at the table and pretends to write.*)

LORD B. I had a box for the opera sent me at the last moment, and I came in haste to see—

MRS. B. Oh, it would be impossible, my lord! Impossible!

LORD B. So I see.

MRS. B. You must go alone.

LORD B. No. I will leave you; but I shall return home. (*Goes to* JOHNS.) What are you prescribing, doctor?

JOHNS. (*Troubled.*) Oh, nothing in particular. A few plasters and leeches, and an emetic.

LORD B. (*Aghast.*) What! All at once?

JOHNS. No; one after the other. The emetic to-morrow, if she is not better.

MRS. B. Thanks to the devotions of this dear, good physician, I—

LORD B. (*Holding out his hand.*) Doctor, allow me.

(*They shake hands.*)

JOHNS. Oh, don't mention it, sir.

LORD B. It is nothing serious, is it?

JOHNS. Oh, no. Fatigue, emotion—

LORD B. What emotion?

JOHNS. Yes; emotion which causes the fatigue.
LORD B. What fatigue?
JOHNS. The fatigue which causes the emotion.
LORD B. I see. Well, I leave her in your care.
JOHNS. Be at rest. You may do so.
LORD B. (*To* MRS. B.) Good-night.
MRS. B. *Au revoir*, my friend.
LORD B. (*Aside to* MRS. B.) You have changed your physician.
MRS. B. Yes, a long time ago.
LORD B. I was not aware of the fact. I will inquire for you to-morrow morning.
MRS. B. Thank you. I think I shall sleep.
LORD B. Doctor.
JOHNS. (*Starting.*) Ah—oh—yes. Did you speak?
LORD B. Do not leave your patient until she is relieved.
JOHNS. Trust me, my lord.
LORD B. Come, Sophia.
[*Exeunt* LORD B. *and* SOPHIA *on tip-toe.*
JOHNS. (*Falling into a chair.*) Thank heaven!
MRS. B. (*Listening.*) Silence! He is there still.
JOHNS. I'm more dead than alive.
SOPHIA. (*Entering.*) He's gone.
JOHNS. (*Relieved.*) At last! (*He draws out his handkerchief and the key falls.*)
MRS. B. The key of that door in your pocket. Put it back, Sophy. (*She rises.*)
JOHNS. So it seems.
MRS. B. How did it come there?
JOHNS. I can't say. (*Struck with an idea.*) Ah! so that we might be alone.
MRS. B. My poor friend, I am so sorry for you. How nervous you were!
JOHNS. Well, but I am not used to such agitating scenes. They move me as much as they agitate me; and they agitate me more than they move me. May I have a glass of water—(MRS. B. *goes to table to prepare it*)—with a little sugar—and a dash of Cognac, if you have it. (*Aside:*) Give me my mother-in-law, rather than this. (*Noise outside.*)
MRS. B. (*Starting.*) What is that noise? (*The door at back is thrown open, and* COBB *dashes in, breathless.*)
COBB. (*In alarm.*) My friend, my friend—
MRS. B. Sir Drake!
JOHNS. (*Rushing to him.*) Eh! What is it?
COBB. Hide me, hide me somewhere.
MRS. B. and JOHNS. What is the trouble?

COBB. The old, the old man has come. I had just time to fly up to back stairs here. But I believe he saw me, and that he is after me. (*Sounds outside.*) Yes, here he comes.

JOHNS. (*Looks out-door at back.*) Major Rodney Tumblebull! (*He rushes through door*, L., *and closes it.*)

COBB. (*Rushes after* JOHNS, *but finds the door locked. In despair:*) Locked! (*Trembles from head to foot.*)

MAJOR T. (*Rushes in at door back, very much moved.*) Pardon me, Mrs. Belcher, for rushing in upon you without my hat, but I've lost my head. (*Sees* COBB.) Oh, remain sir. Pray, do not let me disturb you.

COBB. (*Aside.*) He does not recognize me.

MRS. B. (*To* COBB.) Do not leave me, sir; I wish to speak with you. Now, Major, what is it? (*Dog barks furiously*, L.) Good heavens, there's Bijou!

MAJOR. No, madam; it is Miss Coddleton.

MRS. B. (*At door*, L.) Bijou, Bijou; stop this minute.

MAJOR. That horrid dog! Oh, Mrs. Belcher, I must tell you that Miss Coddleton expected me this evening, and I was late. I should have been here by six o'clock, but I fell asleep. Blasted odd of me, I know. My nights are good, too.

MRS. B. Well. (*Aside to* COBB:) He does not know you.

MAJOR. Well, as I came in, I found Miss Coddleton in hysterics. I flew for the salts, but found none. So I have come here to beg—

MRS. B. With pleasure, Major. Here are mine.

MAJOR. (*To* COBB.) I'm desperate to have been obliged to interrupt your *tête-à-tête.*

COBB. Don't mention it, sir.

SOPHIA. (*Entering in haste.*) Mistress, mistress, here comes his lordship back!

MRS. B. (*With a shriek.*) What! (*Throws herself on the sofa.*)

SOPHIA. He is close upon my heels.

MAJOR. (*Starting to go.*) Eh? Who is it?

MRS. B. (*Wildly.*) Remain.

Enter LORD BLINKERS, *in haste, pale and agitated.*

LORD B. I'm back again. Such a dreadful thing! (*Sees the gentlemen.*) Oh, pardon me. (*Salutes the gentlemen.*)

MRS. B. These gentlemen are here to beg my salts for a lady who has fainted.

MAJOR. I have asked this lady and gentleman's pardon for having disturbed them.

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) Oh, you old stupid!

LORD B. Oh, then this gentleman was here—

MRS. B. Yes, my lord. This gentleman is the doctor.

LORD B. The doctor! Why, just now—

MRS. B. Yes, you saw the other one; but they sent for him. This physician is a homœopathist.

MAJOR. (*To* COBB.) Oh, sir, are you a doctor?

COBB. Yes, a disciple of Hahnemann, you know—the little sugar-pill man.

MRS. B. Doctor Watts.

MAJOR. Oh, then, you will be so good as to come to Miss Coddleton for one moment. Mrs. Belcher will permit it.

COBB. (*Starting.*) You wish me—to—

MRS. B. Go, by all means, doctor. (*Aside:*) What a joke! (*Aloud:*) Here is the vinaigrette.

COBB. Are you sure you wish me to attend Miss Coddleton?

MAJOR. (*Earnestly.*) Oh, I beg you as a favor to me.

[*Exeunt the* MAJOR *and* COBB *at the back.*

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) Oh, to think of poor Mr. Green Greville in that room all this time at the mercy of Bijou!

LORD B. You are better, dear Mrs. Belcher?

MRS. B. Yes, a little.

LORD B. Something terrible has occurred.

MRS. B. Indeed, what is it?

LORD B. Lady Mordaunt Blinkers knows all!

MRS. B. Oh, nonsense!

LORD B. I had no sooner returned home than I was informed by her ladyship's maid that her ladyship had already sued for a divorce.

MRS. B. True?

LORD B. This very day she went to consult an advocate, one Johnston Johns. Now, in order to shun the scandal of a public trial, I have come to a desperate determination. I am here to bid you adieu.

MRS. B. You are going away?

LORD B. It is necessary. To-morrow morning, I shall call upon this Johnston Johns, this advocate, and try to nip this disgraceful affair in the bud; then, during the day, I shall set out for Italy. I shall travel for several weeks, and I hope that this rupture—

MRS. B. A rupture!

LORD B. *Apparent* rupture, will calm Lady Blinkers, and that she will abandon her suit.

(*Sound of a dog barking,* L.)

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) Heavens! Bijou again! and poor Mr. Green Greville's there!

LORD B. That dog is unbearable. What makes her bark so?

MRS. B. (*Starting.*) Oh, nothing! Nothing at all! Pray, do not mind it! She will be quiet in a moment!

LORD B. It must be most annoying to you. Wait!

(*He goes toward door*, L.)

MRS. B. (*Rising.*) What is he going to do? (*Shrieks:*) Oh!

LORD B. (*Running to her.*) What is it?

(MRS. B. *falls upon the sofa.*)

MRS. B. (*Taking his hands.*) Oh, do not leave me! My nerves, my nerves!

MAJOR T. (*Entering.*) I came to return your salts—

LORD B. Here, quick! Give it to me!

MRS. B. (*Raising her voice.*) Kill her! Kill her!

MAJOR. Kill whom? (*Crash in room*, L.)

MRS. B. (*Aside.*) He understands.

LORD B. It is an attack of hysteria! (*To* MRS. B.:) Here, madam, smell this.

MAJOR. (*Surprised.*) Well, well! What has got into this house? Everybody has hysteria! Blasted odd!

LORD B. (*Holding the salts.*) There—so. Inhale.

MAJOR. Mysterious things, these attacks of the nerves. People do not seem to know what they are saying. Fancy, when I returned to the music-room with the doctor just now, Miss Coddleton shrieked out, "What! you, again, imprudent man!" and yet she never saw the man before in her life. (*Sits on a sofa.*) Blasted odd, these emotions, these nerves; blasted— (*Falls asleep.*)

MRS. B. (*Rising.*) It is past. I am better now. You must go, my lord.

LORD B. And leave you alone?

MRS. B. I am in need of rest. This news of your departure, so sudden. You will write to me, will you not?

LORD B. Oh, yes; often.

MRS. B. Every day?

LORD B. Perhaps. (*Kisses her hand.*) Courage.

MRS. B. I shall think of you. (*The* MAJOR *snores.*)

LORD B. What! That old man asleep here? Wake up, old man, wake up!

MAJOR. (*Dreaming.*) Imprudent man! Eh? What? (*Starts up.*) Oh, pardon me. I was dozing. Blasted odd of me. My nights are good; but, in spite of that—

MRS. B. *Au revoir*, gentlemen.

MAJOR. I shall run round the square to wake myself up.

MRS. B. And Miss Coddleton?

MAJOR. Oh, she is all right. The doctor is with her.

LORD B. Dear Mrs. Belcher—I might almost say Emily upon this occasion—I shall write to you.

MRS. B. Every day?

MAJOR. (*Saluting.*) Madam! (*Taking* LORD B.'s *arm.*) Blasted odd of me! My nights are so good!

[*Exeunt the* MAJOR *and* LORD B.

(MRS. B. *follows them, to be sure they are gone; then she runs to door* L. *and knocks.*)

MRS. B. You may come in, Mr. Greville. (*Enter* JOHNSTON JOHNS, *pale and haggard; his hair and cravat in disorder.*) Good heavens, my dear friend, how you do look!

JOHNS. I have slain Bijou! I strangled her!

MRS. B. She is dead, then?

JOHNS. It was an absolute necessity. She would have torn me in pieces.

MRS. B. (*Looking at his hands.*) What! Did she bite you?

JOHNS. Barked and bit both! Tell me, has she drank any water to-day?

MRS. B. I do not know.

JOHNS. Heaven forbid that I should go mad!

SOPHIA. (*Entering with tea-tray.*) Here is the tea.

JOHNS. Oh, yes, a cup; 'twill warm me. It was very cold in your chamber. I was half frozen.

SOPHIA. Oh, master's dressing-gown!

MRS. B. Yes, Mr. Greville, take off your coat.

JOHNS. How my teeth chatter! (*Puts on dressing-gown.*)

MRS. B. Stay, here is a smoking-cap I was embroidering.

(*Puts cap on his head.*)

JOHNS. Oh, thank you; I am already better.

SOPHIA. (*Preparing the tea.*) Mistress is served.

JOHNS. Oh, Gods, what an evening I am having!

MRS. B. (*With cup of tea.*) Here, try this. Take care; it is boiling.

JOHNS. (*Tasting.*) Oh, just a little Cognac in it. It will cool the tea and warm me.

MRS. B. Sophy, you may retire. [*Exit* SOPHIA, R.

JOHNS. (*Mournfully.*) What a chapter of accidents!

MRS. B. Never mind. It is all over now. Do you feel better?

JOHNS. Yes, the heat begins to revive me. I am not used to exciting emotions, so that I— (*Drinks. A loud knocking is heard.*) Hark! What's that? (*He rises.*)

MRS. B. Silence!

VOICE. (*Outside.*) Open, in the name of the law.

JOHNS. (*Aghast.*) In the name of the law?

MRS. B. (*Horrified.*) The Chief of Police!

JOHNS. My mother-in-law has sent him.

MRS. B. In heaven's name, fly!

JOHNS. Oh, yes. How? where? (MRS. B. *puts out the lamp*) I'm blind now. I can't see. (*The door*, R., *is thrown open; enter the* CHIEF OF POLICE *and his* SECRETARY. JOHNS *rushes to the left.*)

CHIEF. There he is.

MRS. B. What does this mean, sir?

CHIEF. Do not be alarmed, madam; a mere formality. I am here at the request of certain parties to establish the presence of Lord Mordaunt Blinkers in your house, at this late hour of the night.

MRS. B. But Lord Blinkers is not here.

SEC. You are mistaken, madam, there he stands.

Enter SOPHIA *and* ANGELINA *with lights.* MRS. B. *falls upon a sofa.*

SEC. His Lordship Mordaunt Blinkers was concealed in yonder room.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) They take me for Blinkers.

CHIEF. Your name, sir?

JOHNS. (*Speaking to himself.*) Mordaunt Blinkers!—and it is I who—

CHIEF. (*To Secretary.*) That's he. Write.

JOHNS. (*To himself.*) It was I who counseled Lady Blinkers to have him seized. (*Falls upon a chair, with his head in his hands.*)

CHIEF. (*To Secretary.*) Have you made a note of the dressing-gown and the smoking-cap?

SEC. Yes, sir.

CHIEF. Give it to me. (*Takes paper.*) That is sufficient for us; we will retire. (*To* SOPHIA:) Will you be good enough to show us out?

ANG. (*Taking* JOHNS' *coat and hat from a chair.*) At last I am revenged!

[TABLEAU. CURTAIN.]

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Same as in Act I.*

(*As the curtain rises,* KATE *is discovered dusting the writing-table.*)

KATE. It is very queer and I don't understand it. Here's master out already, and I don't believe he ever set his foot outside the door until after his breakfast before in his life. Hark, here he comes.

Enter JOHNSTON JOHNS *at back, with a package in his hand.*

JOHNS. Has my wife left her room?

KATE. No, sir; not yet.

JOHNS. Good. (*Places package on the table.*)

KATE. (*Surprised.*) Why, you have shaved your whiskers!

JOHNS. Yes; does it change me?

KATE. Oh, yes; you are awfully ugly without them.

JOHNS. Eh?

KATE. I mean you were much handsomer with them.

JOHNS. Do you think I should not be recognized?

KATE. Well, I recognized you because I did. But, surely, those who don't know you, wouldn't recognize you.

JOHNS. Idiot, you!

KATE. Oh, it's a real shame, those pretty whiskers!

JOHNS. Another time I will consult you before shaving. (*Takes a coat out of the package.*)

KATE. Well, you'll make no mistake if you do so, sir.

Enter SILENUS COBB *at the back.*

JOHNS. Ah, Cobb, my dear fellow, come in. Leave us, Kate.

KATE. What for?

JOHNS. (*Angry.*) No matter; go away.

KATE. Where?

JOHNS. Wherever you will; I don't care. [*Exit* KATE.

COBB. I was very anxious to see you, to learn what happened last night.

JOHNS. Oh, my friend.

COBB. Miss Coddleton mentioned something about an affair with the Chief of Police.

JOHNS. A perfect tragedy, and a frightful one at that.

COBB. You alarm me. What is it? Speak!

JOHNS. Ah, let me collect myself. I have had such a terrible shaking-up, that my poor head— Well, I was seated with Emily—that is, Mrs. Belcher—and was having a cup of tea, when the Chief of Police knocked.

COBB. Why did he knock ?

JOHNS. To get in, of course.

COBB. But why did he wish to get in ?

JOHNS. To catch them.

COBB. Catch them! Whom ?

JOHNS. Them. I'm going to explain as fast as I can. It was I who urged his wife to have him arrested.

COBB. Whom do you mean by him ?

JOHNS. Her husband.

COBB. Whose husband ?

JOHNS. If you interrupt me again, I'll not say another word.

COBB. Pardon me; proceed.

JOHNS. The Chief of Police entered, and finding me up in one corner—

COBB. Up in one corner! Why, you said you were having tea!

JOHNS. So I was, but I rushed into the corner to conceal myself. Mrs. Belcher had extinguished the lamp. (COBB *is astonished.*) Don't you understand ? We were in the dark. It ought to be clear. What is the matter with you this morning ?

COBB. Nothing, nothing; continue.

JOHNS. Well, finding me in the corner in a dressing-gown and smoking-cap, he took me for Lord Mordaunt Blinkers!

COBB. Who is Lord Mordaunt Blinkers ?

JOHNS. The lover.

COBB. Whose lover ?

JOHNS. Mrs. Belcher's lover. Now I, not knowing his name, you can fancy the effect upon me when I heard the Chief pronounce the name of the husband—

COBB. Of the lover, you mean.

JOHNS. No, no; the husband.

COBB. A moment ago you said *lover*—now you say *husband!* I'm bewildered!

JOHNS. Why it's simple enough. The lover of Mrs. Belcher, but the husband of the wife.

COBB. Has Mrs. Belcher a wife, then ?

JOHNS. No, no; the wife of Lord Mordaunt Blinkers.

COBB. (*Aside.*) He's mad; raving mad.

JOHNS. I cannot understand what is the matter with you this morning. Now attend. Lady Mordaunt Blinkers has sued for a divorce, her husband being Mrs. Emily Belcher's lover.

COBB. Well.

JOHNS. I am the counsel for Lady Mordaunt Blinkers; in her cause I urged her to have her husband arrested.

COBB. Well.

JOHNS. Now it was not Lord Blinkers whom the Chief of Police caught last night, but me, whom by mistake he took for his lordship.

COBB. Thunder. This is becoming serious.

JOHNS. But that is not all. When the Chief departed, I wished to follow him. Impossible!

COBB. Why so?

JOHNS. I had no coat and hat.

COBB. They took them away as evidence against you?

JOHNS. So this morning I was obliged to go and purchase a new coat and hat. Oh, my friend, what an evening! what a night!

COBB. Stay; you have shaved your whiskers.

JOHNS. Yes, for fear that the Chief of Police might recognize me some day or other. You understand? What if Lord Blinkers should learn that it was I who passed for him?

COBB. He is sure to, you may depend upon it. You cannot plead for his wife now.

JOHNS. Why not?

COBB. Because the principal argument of your plea would be the presence of Lord Blinkers at Mrs. Belcher's house after one o'clock. Now if it should transpire that it was you who were there in a dressing-gown and smoking-cap, taking tea up in a corner—what an incident for a criminal court!

JOHNS. (*Falling upon the sofa.*) Oh, you're right. It is out of the question for me to be Lady Blinker's advocate. My first case, for which I have waited two years, is lost. Oh, I shall go mad. (*Rises and paces the room.*)

COBB. There, there; don't be dismal. (*Takes* JOHNS' *hand and starts.*) What! are you wounded?

JOHNS. No; it was only Bijou. We fought together. Hush, here comes my wife. Not a word.

COBB. Fear nothing.

Enter MRS. JOHNS, L. *She sees* COBB.

MRS. J. (*Starting.*) Oh, pardon me; I disturb you.

JOHNS. Not in the least, my dear. (*Kisses her.*) Mr. Silenus Cobb, my colleague; the gentleman who wrote to me yesterday.

MRS. J. (*Saluting.*) Mr. Cobb!

COBB. (*Saluting.*) Madam!

MRS. J. Well, what success in the arbitration?

COBB. It passed off very well, madam; the affair is arranged.

MRS. J. And quite finished?

JOHNS. (*Suddenly.*) I swear I never will set my foot in it again—(*Stopping.*) That is—

COBB. Yes; we may say that the business is entirely disposed of.

MRS. J. Good. What! why, Johnston dear, you've shaved your whiskers!

JOHNS. Ye-es, yes, this morning. Really can't say how I happened to. Mere distraction, I suppose.

COBB. Yes, he has carved the mutton chops this time, sure.

MRS. J. (*Sees his hand.*) What is that, dear? Were you injured? No; bitten.

JOHNS. (*Troubled.*) Yes—that is to say—no.

COBB. Merely a slight accident which happened yesterday while we were at dinner.

JOHNS. I was bitten by—

COBB. (*Pulling his coat.*) That is, the lamp-shade burst—

JOHNS. Oh yes; and the pieces fell upon my hand. (*Aside to* COBB:) Thanks.

KATE. (*Entering.*) The Honorable Mrs. Still has come in.

MRS. J. I will go to her immediately.

KATE. It is master as she wants to see.

JOHNS. Wants to see me?

KATE. Yes, you.

MRS. J. Beg mamma to step in here. [*Exit* KATE.

COBB. I will leave you.

JOHNS. No, no. Go in there. (*Points to door*, R.)

COBB. But I—

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Don't desert me, I beg of you. (*Pushes* COBB *in at door*, R.)

Enter MRS. STILL *at back, furious, and concealing something under her cloak.*

MRS. S. Where is he, where is he? Oh, there he is!

MRS. J. Good morning, mamma.

MRS. S. Good morning, good morning. (*To* JOHNS:) Where were you last night?

JOHNS. I—I—

MRS. S. It is not true. What were you doing?

JOHNS. Why, I—

MRS. S. You know it's a falsehood. Your coat, your hat, where are they?

MRS. J. (*Pointing to a chair.*) There they are, mamma.

MRS. S. *Here* they are. (*She takes coat and hat from under her cloak and hurls them at* JOHNS.)

MRS. J. Oh, mamma!

MRS. S. The Chief of Police has just brought them to me with a letter; and such a letter!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) The devil! The Chief of Police!

MRS. S. (*Taking letter from her pocket.*) Listen, my child, listen. (*Reads:*) "Instead of rummaging in sauce-pans"—

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) It is Angelina.

MRS. S. (*Reading.*) "You had better keep one eye on your son-in-law." (*Speaks:*) What did I tell you, my dear? Watch him, I said—watch him.

JOHNS. Pardon me one moment—

MRS. S. It's not so, and you know it. (*Reading:*) "I send you the coat and hat which he forgot last night at house of Miss Blank. I am your devoted admirer, Warming-pan." (*Speaks:*) The hussy!

MRS. J. (*Sits weeping.*) Oh, mamma!

MRS. S. Do not weep, my child; your mother remains to you. Go to your room. In less than an hour I shall see my lawyer. (*Goes* L.)

MRS. J. What! a suit?

MRS. S. A divorce.

JOHNS. But, madam—

MRS. S. Stop where you are. It is a falsehood.

JOHNS. But, mother-in-law—

MRS. S. I positively forbid you to address me as your mother-in-law.

JOHNS. And why so?

MRS. S. Do you fancy I do not see the irony you intend, when you say mother-in-law?

JOHNS. But—

MRS. S. I know it just as well as that I am no longer beautiful, though I have been. Do you understand, sir? I have been beautiful. But you cannot swear that you did not leave your whiskers at Miss Blank's house. Wretch! deceiver! (*To* MRS. J.:) Come, my child, come; rest upon your mother's bosom.

JOHNS. I beg you will listen—

MRS. S. There is not one word of truth in all you say.

[*Exeunt* MRS. S. *and* MRS. J., L.

JOHNS. (*Sinking into a chair.*) I'm mad.

COBB. (*Entering,* R.) Ah, my poor friend, I have heard all.

JOHNS. What will become of me? What shall I do? (*Struck with an idea.*) Ah, I will go and consult a lawyer.

COBB. A lawyer! And why?

JOHNS. I no longer know what I am saying.

COBB. Your wife loves. It will all end happily.

KATE. (*Entering.*) There is a man below as wants to see you. I told him you was having a squabble with your mother-in-law, and he said it didn't matter to him if you was; so he gave me this card. (*Hands card.*)

COBB. (*Reads card.*) Lord Mordaunt Blinkers.

JOHNS. (*Starting up in dismay.*) Blinkers! Then all is lost! (*To* COBB:) Receive him, I beg of you.

COBB. I?

JOHNS. (*Wildly.*) Send him away, then. I cannot be bothered. (*Rushes off*, R.)

COBB. Show his lordship up, Kate. [*Exit Kate.*] Now, what?

Enter LORD BLINKERS.

LORD B. Mr. Johnston— (*Aside:*) The devil! The homœopathic physician! (*Aloud:*) Good day, doctor.

COBB. (*Saluting.*) My lord!

LORD B. I wished to have a moment's consultation with Mr. Johnston Johns, the lawyer.

COBB. (*Embarrassed.*) Oh, by all means—yes.

LORD B. I have not the pleasure of knowing the gentleman; but I am aware that he is the advocate employed by my wife in a suit for a divorce which she contemplates. Now something most abnormal has occurred, even last evening; and, before going further, I wished to explain it to Mr. Johnston Johns.

COBB. Oh certainly, in a moment. (*Aside:*) What is to be done! (*Aloud:*) It is impossible to see him this morning; he is ill.

LORD B. Must be very sudden, then, for I know that my wife saw him yesterday.

COBB. Yes, yes; quite sudden. This very morning even. Produced by a discussion with his mother-in-law. You see his nerves and blood were all out of order. It is something that we doctors term a bilioso-nervoso-sanguinoso derangement.

LORD B. (*Appalled.*) Really! Quite serious then? Be good enough not to inform him of my visit; it might increase the bilioso-nervoso, et cetera.

COBB. Just as you say, my lord. For the moment, Mr. Johnston Johns is incapable of attending to your business.

LORD B. It is my loss. (*Saluting:*) Doctor!

COBB. (*Saluting.*) My lord!

LORD B. (*Suddenly.*) Oh, by-the-by, doctor, I shall be

obliged to you if you will not mention the fact of having met me last evening.

COBB. Be at rest, my lord. Discretion is a professional virtue.

LORD B. (*Saluting.*) Doctor!

COBB. (*Opening the door at back.*) My lord! [*Exit*, R.] Not so badly managed, after all. Silenus, you're a success as a medical man. (*Goes to door*, R.) Come in.

JOHNS. (*Entering.*) Has he gone?

COBB. Yes.

LORD B. (*Entering suddenly.*) Upon reflection, I—

JOHNS and COBB. (*Aghast.*) Again!

LORD B. What! The allopathic physician? (*Saluting* JOHNS.) Doctor!

COBB. (*Aside.*) Salute him.

JOHNS. (*Saluting.*) My lord!

LORD B. Is it then so serious, gentlemen, that you are obliged to meet for consultation? (*To* JOHNS:) Pray tell me, how have you left Mr. Johnston Johns?

JOHNS. (*Amazed.*) Eh, what?

COBB. (*Aside.*) I have told him you were very ill.

JOHNS. (*Troubled.*) Yes, I'm rather indisposed to-day.

COBB. (*Aside.*) You stupid fool, *you* are not ill, but *Johnston Johns!*

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Well, but who am I, then?

COBB. (*Aside.*) The doctor, of course!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Oh, true; so I am.

LORD B. (*Aside.*) They are holding a consultation. (*Aloud:*) Well, gentlemen.

JOHNS. Johns is ill—very ill, poor devil!

LORD B. I have reflected, and not having been able to see Mr. Johnston Johns—

JOHNS. (*Quickly.*) Oh, impossible! utterly impossible!

LORD B. Yes, so your confrere tells me. I have returned to beg leave to write a few words to him. Just fancy; last evening, at the lady's house where I had the pleasure of meeting you both, some impudent scoundrel passed himself off for me—and, too, in the very eyes of the law!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) I'm going to faint!

COBB. (*Aside.*) Hold on a minute. (*Aloud:*) Indeed! Is it true?

LORD B. It is of very grave significance, considering the suit which is being brought against me; and while I am using every endeavor to discover that knave, I shall inform Mr. Johnston Johns, just as I have the Chief of Police, of this rascality. Now, where may I write? (JOHNS *points to* R.)

COBB. Will you be good enough as to step this way?

LORD B. Thank you. (*Suddenly:*) Ah, I forgot, doctor. (*To* JOHNS:) I shall be obliged to you if you will not mention the fact of having met me last evening.

JOHNS. Be at rest, my lord. Discretion is a professional virtue.

MAJOR TUMBLEBULL. (*Appearing at door at back.*) May I come in?

JOHNS and COBB. (*Aside.*) The Major!

LORD B. (*Aside.*) Ah! the old cove who was asleep.

MAJOR. Ah, Johns, my dear boy!

JOHNS. (*Aside in alarm.*) Don't call me Johns. (*Aloud:*) Johns—that is, Mr. Johnston Johns, is very ill.

MAJOR. What! You are ill?

JOHNS. I? No. Mr. Johns! (*Aside to* MAJOR:) Hold your tongue. (*Goes up stage.*)

COBB. (*To* LORD B.) Don't mind him, my lord. He's a little queer. (*Taps his forehead.*)

LORD B. I made up my mind he was so yesterday.

COBB. (*Aside to the* MAJOR.) Be quiet, Major!

MAJOR. (*Recognizing* COBB.) Ah, the doctor. Charmed to meet you again. (*Aside to* COBB:) I beg you will not mention where you met me yesterday.

COBB. Don't be alarmed. Discretion is a virtue of our profession. (*Goes up stage.*)

MAJOR. (*Sees* LORD B.) What! you here? (*Salutes.*) Sir!

LORD B. (*Salutes.*) Sir!

MAJOR. (*Aside to* LORD B.) As we met—

LORD B. (*Aside to* MAJOR.) Last evening—

MAJOR and LORD B. I shall be obliged to you if you will not mention the fact.

LORD B. Just what I was going to say to you.

MAJOR. Very good. Agreed. (*They shake hands.*)

LORD B. I was on my way to write a note to Mr. Johnston Johns.

MAJOR. (*Astonished.*) *Write* to Johnston Johns!

JOHNS and COBB. (*Passing the* MAJOR, *aside.*) Hold your tongue.

JOHNS. Allow me to show you the way sir. [*Goes* R.

LORD B. Oh, thank you. [*Goes off by door*, R., *with* JOHNS.

MAJOR. (*Running to the door.*) But my two hundred pounds?

JOHNS. (*Looking back.*) I have no time now. (*To* COBB:) Get rid of him in some way, I beg of you. Send him away. [*Exit*, R.

MAJOR. Where is he going?

COBB. To court.

MAJOR. But my money? I *must* speak to him!

COBB. (*Holding him.*) Oh, let it go now. You can talk with him later. I must go now. I have some patients to attend. Will you accompany me?

MAJOR. Not until I have seen Johns. And here is Miss Coddleton expecting me at twelve o'clock.

COBB. But if you sit down, you will fall asleep.

MAJOR. True, quite true. Ah, doctor, what can you prescribe for this everlasting somnolence?

COBB. Nothing better than fresh air. So, come on.

MAJOR. Do you know, doctor, when I sleep in the day I am tormented with terrible dreams?

COBB. Fresh air, fresh air. Come; I am in haste.

MAJOR. Oh, bah! Grant me two minutes. I will pay you for your time.

JOHNS. (*Appearing at door*, R., *aside to* COBB.) Get him out of here, for heaven's sake. (*Disappears.*)

COBB. (*Aside.*) I've an idea. (*Aloud:*) Proceed, sir, I'm listening. (*While the* MAJOR *speaks*, COBB *goes to the mantel and advances the hands of the clock.*)

MAJOR. Well, I have employed two physicians. The first I left because I had no confidence in him. I was very well indeed under his care, but I had no confidence in him. And you know, in medicine, confidence is every thing.

COBB. (*Returning to C.*) And the second?

MAJOR. The second? Oh, he was a prince of science. But his prices—something terrific!

COBB. So you dismissed him? (*Walks the* MAJOR *round so that he can see the clock.*)

MAJOR. Yes, and since that time I have been worse than— (*Sees clock.*) Good heavens!

COBB. What is it?

MAJOR. (*Aghast.*) Five minutes after one o'clock!

COBB. (*Looking at his watch.*) I am ten minutes after one.

MAJOR. (*Looking at his watch.*) But I am only five and thirty minutes after eleven!

COBB. You are very slow indeed.

MAJOR. And Miss Coddleton expected me at twelve! She will be in hysterics!

COBB. In that case, I will attend her. Shall I accompany you?

MAJOR. (*Gratefully.*) Excellent doctor! You have proved yourself a father to her.

KATE. (*Entering at back.*) Where is master?

COBB. At court.

MAJOR. (*Hurriedly.*) Come, doctor, come; I'm going.

KATE. At court?

COBB. (*Aside.*) No, he's in there. (*Points* R.) Now, sir, forward. I am with you.

[*Exeunt the* MAJOR *and* COBB *at the back.*

KATE. What is the matter with them all to-day? They are cracked.

JOHNS. (*Entering*, R.) Ah, gone at last!

KATE. Master.

JOHNS. (*Starting.*) Well, what is it?

KATE. Your lady client is below.

JOHNS. (*Aghast.*) Lady Blinkers here! And his lordship there! I cannot see her at present.

KATE. Shall I send her away, then?

JOHNS. No, let her remain where she is. I'll go to her myself. [*Exit at back.*

KATE. (*Laughing.*) There's another cracked brain for you.

Enter MRS. STILL, *in haste*, L.

MRS. S. There is a woman below.

KATE. Yes; master's client. And a right pretty little thing she is too.

MRS S. That is enough. Leave me. [*Exit* KATE *at back.*] His *client!* More likely to be the woman at whose house he passed the evening. Hark, some one comes; I shall satisfy my own curiosity. (*Conceals herself behind door*, L.)

Enter LORD BLINKERS, R., *with a letter in his hand.*

LORD B. No one here? But I must send this letter to Mr. Johnston Johns. What a strange house, to be sure! (*Goes to door at back and recoils.*) What! My wife with that doctor? (*Conceals himself behind door*, R.)

Enter LADY BLINKERS, *followed by* JOHNS.

LADY B. Only five minutes! I really must see you!

JOHNS. Be seated, madam. (*Flies to* R. *and looks in; aside:*) The husband gone! Thank heavens.

LADY B. (*Seated upon sofa*, L.) I have brought all the papers relating to the mad expenditures of my husband.

LORD B. (*Aside.*) What! To the doctor? I don't understand.

MRS. S. (*Aside.*) It is a client, after all.

JOHNS. (*Hesitating to take papers.*) My dear madam, I really— (*Aside:*) What folly to throw away such a case!

LADY B. You hesitate to take charge of my suit? Oh, I supplicate you, Mr. Johns.

LORD B. (*Aside.*) What! Johns, her lawyer? 'Tis he!

JOHNS. I assure you, your case is excellent; but considering the unpardonable conduct of Lord Blinkers—

LORD B. (*Starting.*) Eh!

JOHNS. (*Sees him and drops into a chair.*) He! Ah!

LADY B. What is it, sir?

JOHNS. Nothing, nothing! A momentary blindness. (*Aside:*) The husband!

LADY. B. You are correct, sir. His conduct is indeed unpardonable.

JOHNS. (*Troubled.*) Excuse me, I—

LADY B. Oh, you said it. Even *I* almost hesitate—

JOHNS. And you are right. (*Aside:*) I must patch up this matter some way.

LADY B. But I no longer hesitate—

JOHNS. And you are wrong.

LADY B. (*Aside.*) The man is mad.

JOHNS. (*Starting aside.*) My mother-in-law too!

LADY B. What is it now?

JOHNS. Oh, nothing, dear madam, nothing!

LADY B. Do you mean, sir, that you ever undertake to defend faithless husbands?

JOHNS. And why not?

LORD B. (*Aside.*) He's a trump!

MRS. S. The monster!

JOHNS. So much the worse for me if I do. I burn my fleet. But listen—

LADY B. (*Astonished.*) Sir!

JOHNS. I say, madam, that a wife is oftentimes too ready to demand a separation. A divorce is too grave an affair to be treated lightly.

LADY B. But, sir—

JOHNS. Do not interrupt me, madam. Your cause becomes mine. If I take charge of one, I also take charge of the other; if I gain one, both are gained.

LADY B. (*Aside.*) What does the man mean?

JOHNS. (*Rises and pleads.*) It is easy to say a man is guilty. Guilty! But have you read what is written upon his heart? Are you aware that he may be driven to an extremity which he regrets? True, he has deserted the conjugal fireside, and has sought pleasure and peace of mind abroad. But whose fault is it? Might it not be the fault of those whom he has left at home? Might not the unfortunate man possess a mother-in-law who renders his life unbearable?

MRS. S. (*Aside.*) What does he say?

LADY B. Oh, no; my husband has no mother-in-law.

JOHNS. That is quite possible, madam; but do not oblige me to say that *I* have one! (*Pleading again.*) Then where is the judge who does not possess some sense of indulgence in his heart for such an oppressed creature?—For one who

loves his wife—and he does love her—but who is driven from his home by the continual tyranny, pestering, and suspicions of his mother-in-law?—Driven from home, and launched upon the adventures of a nameless existence. And is this the man whom you would reduce to despair? This the man whom you would repulse, did he return repentant and chastened? No, you could not do that (*to* LADY B.), for you love him still! (*To* MRS. S.:) For you have ever loved him.

LADY B. It is true!

MRS. S. (*Aside, wiping her eyes.*) He has quite touched me!

LORD B. (*Advancing, aside.*) Very good!

JOHNS. You would meet him with open arms—forget and pardon all; and instead of a separation, you would seek a reconciliation. Your time has come, my lord!

LORD B. Bertha!

LADY B. (*Rising.*) Mordaunt! (*They embrace.*)

MRS. S. (*Rushing out with open arms.*) Son-in-law, embrace your mother-in-law!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Bah! (*They embrace.*)

MRS. J. (*Entering*, L.) What do I see! A reconciliation?

MRS. S. Daughter, embrace your husband.

MRS. J. But, mamma.

MRS. S. Embrace your husband. (*They embrace.*) Ah, could you but have heard him; such a plea! It made your mother weep.

MRS. J. Oh!

MRS. S. I am all admiration, Alice—all admiration.

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) I have gained my first case.

KATE. (*Entering.*) Master, here comes old Tumblebull.

JOHNS. Ask him to come up.

KATE. He's blubbering like a calf.

Enter MAJOR TUMBLEBULL *at back, wiping his eyes, followed by* COBB.

MAJOR. I have come to say farewell.

JOHNS. Are you leaving London?

MAJOR. Yes; Coddleton has dismissed me. I have failed for two hundred pounds.

JOHNS. I congratulate you, Major.

MAJOR. The doctor has recommended the country. Stay! Where is he? Oh, there you are!

JOHNS. (*To* COBB.) All is happily settled.

COBB. (*Astonished.*) Oh, wonderful, wonderful! And most wonderful, wonderful! And yet again wonderful! And after that out of all whooping.

LORD B. Yes, doctor—

COBB. (*Pointing to the* MAJOR.) I am only a doctor to attend Miss Coddleton.

MAJOR. (*Going to* COBB.) Ah, doctor—

COBB. (*Pointing to* LORD B.) Only a doctor when I treat Mrs. Belcher.

MAJOR. I don't understand.

COBB. Very well, let it pass. (*To* JOHNS:) Great news, my friend. Alarmed at the scene last night, Mrs. Emily Belcher has fled to America.

JOHNS. (*To* LADY B.) Mrs. Belcher has left London?

LORD B. (*Starting.*) Emily gone?

LADY B. What do you say, my lord?

LORD B. Nothing. I have no fears to beat away, no strife to heal. The past unsighed for, and the future sure.

MAJOR. (*Sadly.*) Well, as for me, I'm going to live in the country with a crook—(*with an amorous glance at* MRS. STILL)—unless you will share life with me. Daphne and Chloe—Philemon and Baucis!

MRS. S. (*Coquettishly.*) Flatterer!

MAJOR. (*To* JOHNS.) Gods! what a woman!

JOHNS. (*Aside.*) Oh, if my mother-in-law would only marry! (*Aloud.*) Well, do as we are going to do; come and live at Balefield Hall.

MRS J. (*Surprised.*) What, Johnston!

MRS. S. Never! You have too great talent to (*significantly*) rust out in a village with four or five mummies. No, remain in London. (*Giving her hand to the* MAJOR.) We will keep Balefield Hall; but from time to time you must come and see—

JOHNS. My mother-in-law.

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